

Constantino's Death and Character 3°5

alexander because he fought with Romans, Germans, and Scythians and not with mere Asiatics; greater than Julius Caesar or than Augustus because he fought not with bad men but with good; and greater even than Trajan, because it is a finer [thing] to win back what you have lost than merely to acquire something new. The speech was received *with* ridicule by the gods, and then Hermes pointedly asked Constantine in the Socratic manner, "How would you define your ideal?" (*ῥῆσις* *ἡ* *ἀρετή*) "To have great riches," was Constantine's reply, "and to be able to give away lavishly, and satisfy all one's own desires and those of one's friends." The answer is significant. Julian, like Constantine's other critics, keeps harping on the same string. It is the luxury, extravagance, and self-indulgence of the Emperor that he singles out as the most glaring defect of his character and his squandering of the Imperial resources upon effeminate and un-Roman pomps, useless buildings, and needy and unworthy favourites. Silenus, the bibulous buffoon of Olympus, a moral rebuke from whose lips would be received with shouts of laughter, tells Constantine with mock gravity that he has led life fit only for a cook or a lady's-maid (*οὐκ ἄνθρωπος ἀλλὰ μαγειρῆς ἢ πόρνης*), and so the episode ends. We cannot doubt that there was quite sufficient of truth in these accusations to make the sharp-witted Greeks of the Empire, for whom Julian principally wrote, thoroughly enjoy his biting sarcasms.

But we must be careful not to push too far any argument based upon this lampoon of Julian or